

# In Memoriam

**JAMES BAYLIS**

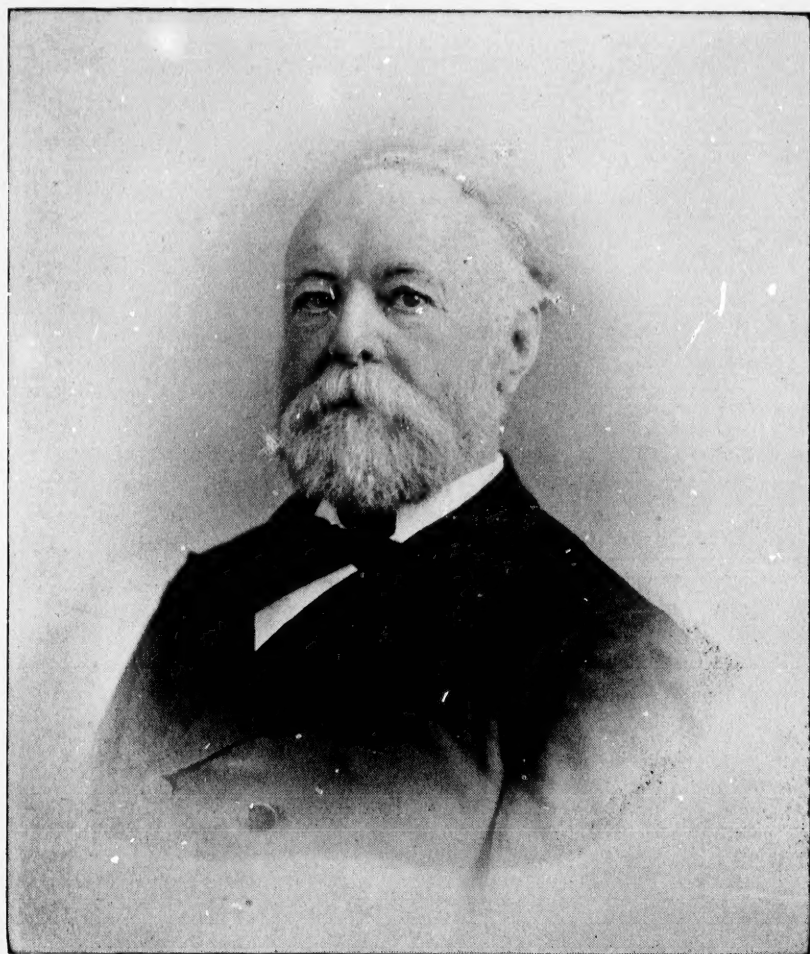
1819



1899

1899  
(23)





Henry J. Morgan

From the Author  
S. M. Baylis

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### JAMES BAYLIS.

The subject of this necessarily brief sketch was born in London on November 14th, in the year 1819, and was consequently in his 80th year at the time of his death on January 2nd, 1899. He came of the sturdy trading stock for which London is proverbial, and which has helped to make England respected in the world's markets, his father, Henry Baylis, being engaged in the manufacture and sale of varnish, paints and oils, with the enviable reputation of "making good goods."

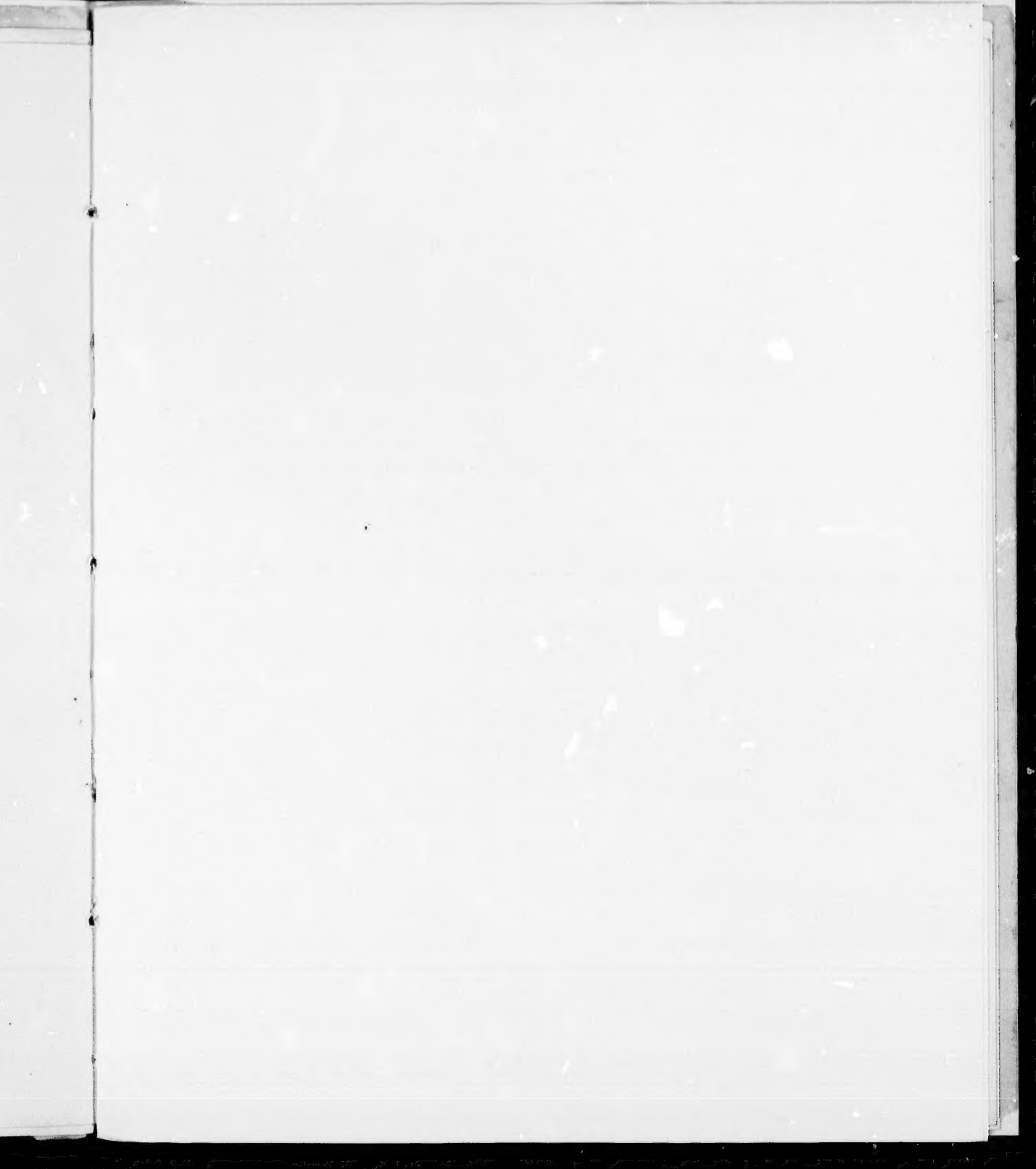
Following the swarming instinct of that crowded hive of workers, his parents left the old home to seek another in the new land, and arrived in Canada somewhere in the middle thirties, James finding employment in Quebec with one Mr. Thornton, and the family taking up their residence at Cote des Neiges, back of the little mountain, the old house being until recent years the summer home of the third generation, who cherish sweet recollections of the taste of the St. Lawrence and Fameuse apples in the old orchard. The elder Mr. Baylis carried on the manufacture of lampblack on the premises, and the peculiar process was the cause of no little consternation among the simple country folk when introduced among them, giving rise to suspicions of dealings with familiar spirits of the weird "black art."

James' term of engagement in Quebec was short, but his carefully preserved letter of recommendation to future employers shows that his was "honorable discharge." He came to Montreal, and was at

once called upon to assume the duties of a good citizen by taking up the defence of both new Queen and country in the call to arms of the loyalists of '37. Fortunately, his share of the fighting was confined to repelling the attacks of Jack Frost on the Home Guard doing cold sentry-go, and assisting to allay the panic which threatened the breasts of many of Montreal's hurriedly assembled defenders.

He early formed the connection as clerk with the old firm of Robert Campbell & Co., importers of dry goods, carpets, etc., which he retained in various capacities up to partner, until, in 1859, he severed his connection to establish himself in the new departure of an exclusive carpet business both in Montreal and Toronto. His sterling reputation even then stood him better than large capital with English manufacturers, who were liberal in proffers of all needed credit, and it was his life-boast that every penny then and after thus supplied in goods was fully paid in cash. The Toronto branch was eventually given up, and resources and energy concentrated in Montreal. In 1876 the partnership of James Baylis & Son was formed, which continued till, in 1896, his failing health determined him to seek rest in retirement, and the expediency of continuing the business not being apparent, the firm was voluntarily wound up by mutual agreement. His active and optimistic nature, unfortunately, however, led him into large railway enterprises in the seventies, which are now the success for others his best efforts and highest hopes failed to ensure to him ; and the Huron and Ontario Ship Canal project, in which he was earlier associated with the original promoters, who were compelled to abandon it, is even now among the possibilities for the betterment of Canada's trade highways.

Mr. Baylis early identified himself with movements for the good of the community, and took part in their public discussion, his life story being bound up with that of his loved city. Among his first efforts was a resolution proposed to his fellow-members of the Mechanics' Institute in the early forties, welcoming the then newly-arrived Governor-General, and he was one of the moving spirits in the agitation about the same time for the early closing of shops at eight o'clock (!) and the then startling innovation of the Saturday half-holiday.





The independent character of the Congregational body determined his church connection, and he attached himself to "Old Zion," following all its vicissitudes of riot, fire and secession, from small beginnings in St. Maurice Street, under the Rev. Henry Wilkes, to final dismemberment on Beaver Hall Hill at the close of the Rev. Mr. Bray's meteoric pastorate, when he formed congenial and lasting connection with the American Presbyterian Church.

The Temperance Cause first had his support at a time when attachment thereto was often maintained at the cost of the sympathy of those near and dear, and his last public act was to join the national deputation of the Dominion Alliance—of which he was one time and for long the Treasurer—which waited on the Government at Ottawa, in the fall of 1898, respecting action on the result of the Prohibition Plebiscite.

Among other public movements, Mr. Baylis was closely associated with the late Joseph Doure, Q.C., and the other defenders of the celebrated Guilford case, and was treasurer of the fund. He was one of the promoters of the recent agitation resulting in the formation of a Citizens' Committee for the abolition of the Quebec Commercial Tax, and joint-treasurer of the fund; and, a long-time member of the Board of Trade, he some years ago consented to be nominated to a seat on the Council as representative of the retail trade, but failed of the support necessary to elect. He did not seek municipal honors, knowing well the sacrifice of time and means this involved for one attempting to do his whole duty. He regarded public office as a public trust, and had intense hatred of every form of "boodling" in public and private business. In politics, while on principle a Liberal, he was no blind partizan, proving his independence on more than one occasion by voting against his party when their stand on broad public questions would not square with his views of right and justice. He was on one occasion tendered the nomination for the County of Argenteuil in the combined interest of the Liberal party and the Temperance cause, but, notwithstanding influential urging, did not see that his business engagements would permit his following his taste and bent into a field for which his gifts of careful

deliberation and convincing speech well fitted him. He was one of the founders of the Young Men's Christian Association, lovingly watching its growth from the acorn to the present spreading proportions, and holding high office in the gift of fellow-members. He was a charter member of the Montreal Homeopathic Association, seeing its work develop from a handful of adherents to an influential clientèle supporting a dozen or more practitioners and a well-equipped little hospital, of which he was one of the Governors. Last, but far from least in his thought and plans, was his long connection as Vice-President with the Boys' Home Corporation, which he saw rise from the small beginning at which he assisted 30 years ago into the important and well-sustained work in which it is now engaged.

He was twice married, his first wife being Miss Jessie McCormack, who, with their two children, all died within a few weeks in the fall of 1850. In 1853 he married Sarah Jane, daughter of the late Samuel Mathewson, and of their eight children, two sons and three daughters, with their mother, survive him. He passed peacefully away, after a brief illness, in the enjoyment of the respect of his commercial associates, the confidence of his co-laborers in religious and philanthropic work, the esteem of friends, and the love of kin, in the sure faith that :

"There is no death ! What seems so is transition.

This life of mortal breath

Is but a suburb of the life elysian

Whose portal we call Death."

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